

## **Statement of Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA)**

### **On the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations Bill**

*\*As Prepared for Delivery\**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) today delivered a floor speech on H.R. 3547, the omnibus funding agreement. Harkin is Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies (LHHS.) Summaries of various provisions of the bill can be found here:

- [Omnibus Agreement Supports High-Quality Early Learning](#)
- [Omnibus Agreement Increases Student Aid, Access to Higher Learning](#)
- [Omnibus Agreement Funds Vital Mental Health Support](#)
- [Omnibus Agreement Supports Health & Wellness](#)

*The full text of Harkin’s speech, as prepared for delivery, is as follows.*

“Mr. President, I have come to the floor to speak in favor of the omnibus appropriations bill we have before us.

“First and foremost, it is noteworthy that this is a bill, not a continuing resolution.

“For the first time in two years, Congress returned to regular order in the appropriations process. Senior members of the Appropriations Committee from both parties have come together to negotiate their priorities, program by program.

“As the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education, I view this as a huge step onto a better path. The Labor-HHS bill, as it is sometimes called, has been in continuing resolution every other year since 2009. This is an irresponsible way to allocate \$160 billion in taxpayer funds, and I am pleased we are putting a stop to that destructive trend here today.

“For the past year, I’ve had people come up to me and say, ‘There’s no way you can get an agreement on Labor-HHS’ or ‘Labor-HHS will be folded into a Continuing Resolution for sure.’

“No one could imagine that Democrats and Republicans would be able to sit down and come to a fair agreement on health and education issues. But that sells our subcommittee short. I’m proud to have worked out a fair agreement with my ranking member, Senator Jerry Moran, as well as with my colleagues on the House side, including Chairman Jack Kingston and Ranking Member

Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro. No one got 100 percent of what they wanted in this bill, which is often the sign of a good deal.

“Despite the fact that I wanted to do more to alleviate the disastrous sequester cuts of 2013, I would like to speak about a few of the essential investments in this bill that I hope my colleagues will join me in supporting.

“First, this bill advances my long-standing priority of shifting American health care from a sick-care system to a genuine health-care system emphasizing wellness, prevention and public health. It provides a \$1 billion increase for the National Institutes of Health, as well as major new funding for brain research and a new initiative to discover ways to prevent and cure Alzheimer’s disease.

“In addition, the bill allocates nearly \$1 billion from the Prevention and Public Health Fund, which I created in the *Affordable Care Act*. There has been some confusion about this Fund, so let me correct the record.

“In past years, resources from the Fund have been diverted to other healthcare purposes. This year, the omnibus allocates 100 percent of the resources from the Fund to prevention and wellness activities. It is being reported that the omnibus cuts or eliminates the Fund. Anyone who has read this bill knows that this is absolutely untrue. Section 219 of Division H of this bill allocates the Fund.

“It’s all there in black and white. Far from eliminating the Fund, the bill identifies what the Fund will be used for this year, including \$160 million for immunization programs; \$104 million for cancer screenings; and \$105 million for smoking cessation programs. On October 1st, another appropriation of \$1 billion will be deposited in the Fund from the ACA, and I intend to allocate the Fund just as we did in this omnibus.

“If there is a doubt in anyone’s mind that the Fund is alive and well, and fulfilling the purpose for which it was originally intended, consider this: the American Public Health Association has praised the omnibus specifically for allocating the Prevention Fund, saying, “We are also pleased that the bill fully allocates available funds from the Prevention and Public Health Fund for the first time.”

“As the author of the Fund, I consider the allocation of these resources to prevention and wellness as a major achievement in this bill.

“My bill also includes significant new investments to support early learning initiatives. We included an increase of over \$1 billion for Head Start, which will more than restore cuts from sequestration. Near and dear to my heart, nearly half of that increase will be used to expand Early Head Start for kids from before birth through age three.

“In addition, the bill provides \$250 million which can be used to help States develop high quality early learning programs for low and middle income 4 year olds. Both of these investments improve access to high-quality early learning experiences for children from birth to kindergarten.

“I truly believe that these investments lay the foundation for future prosperity by better preparing America’s next generation.

“One reason it is important to reassess programs every year is to respond to current events and changing needs. The nation was devastated by the tragic shootings that occurred last year in Newtown, Connecticut. This bill provides increase resources for providing the mental health and school safety activities we have been talking about for over a year. The bill includes \$140 million—an increase of \$29 million—for specific activities that support safe school environments. The bill also provides \$1.13 billion, an increase of \$213 million, for mental health programs such as mental health first aid training grants, the National Child Traumatic Stress initiative, suicide prevention, and the Mental Health Block Grant.

“Other highlights of my bill: It supports the economic recovery by providing workers with job training, and by protecting workers’ rights. It makes it possible for the maximum Pell Grant to rise by an estimated \$85 to \$5,730. It allocates an additional \$700 million for community health centers – so important to my State of Iowa. And it provides higher funding for activities that support safe and healthy workplaces and school environments.

“Mr. President, in light of the investments I mentioned, plus many more, I urge my colleagues to support the omnibus bill. Given the tight overall budget, these are all remarkable achievements. I have always taken pride in the fact that my Labor-HHS-Education bill is the bill in which we invest in America’s human infrastructure. We have had to make tough choices. But this new bill lives up to that high calling.”

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